

A JOHNSONIAN NEWS LETTER

Vol. I No. 6 Address communications to J. L. Clifford
Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Penna.

Oct., 1941

After a pleasant summer of travel and study your editor is back at his desk, hoping to receive your queries, news items, and suggestions. He does not wish to seem perpetually repetitious, but the success of this venture does depend on your cooperation.

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PROGRAM FOR INDIANAPOLIS

As announced last spring, the program of Group VIII at the Dec. meetings has been planned as a symposium on the relation of the study of ideas to 18th century literature. We are now sorry to report that Marjorie Nicolson (Columbia), who was to have given the leading paper, finds that she will be unable to participate. Your chairman "Pete" Jones (West. Res.) is consequently faced with the urgent problem of securing a paper, or papers, to fill the place left vacant, and asks that we broadcast an appeal for suggestions.

Will any member of our group who is willing to prepare a paper which could be fitted into the program as planned please get in touch immediately with any officer of Group VIII, or with your editor.

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GROUP VIII LUNCHEON

Plans are going forward for an 18th century luncheon to be held during the M. L. A. meetings in Indianapolis -- probably on the first day, Monday, Dec. 29. The selection of such an early date has two advantages: it will not conflict with the annual University gatherings, usually scheduled for the second day, and it will allow an early opportunity for

"getting together" with others interested in the same topics. In this way, we hope, acquaintances may be made and friendships begun at the very start, which will continue throughout the remainder of the meetings.

The luncheon will be a purely social affair, with no formal speeches or papers. The entire emphasis will be placed on general introductions, so that no one need discover on the last day that "so-and-so" who is writing on a similar topic has been there all the time, and the two have never met.

With the next issue of this News Letter, in November, return post cards will be enclosed, in order that some estimate may be made of the number who will wish to attend. Plan to meet your friends at the luncheon -- 1 o'clock on Monday, Dec. 29.

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NEWS FROM ENGLAND

In the terrible raids on Liverpool last spring the house of A. L. Reade, author of the many valuable volumes of Johnsonian Gleanings, was damaged. Fortunately the damage was not devastating -- broken windows and cracked walls -- and he now writes of the house as being fairly well restored to "weather-tightness". He adds:

"It was fortunate that I had removed most of my papers and books to the cellars beforehand, though they might not have suffered very much if they had been left in their places. But if the bombing had come before the removal, the removal would hardly have been possible under the conditions of mess and disturbance that prevailed all over the house after it. The first thing I moved ... was

the big consolidated index to my Johnsonian printing, with its 20,000 cards, some of them with as many as 150 references on them. Now I can feel that whatever happens my treasures are as safe as I can reasonably make them.

"It is satisfactory, as you remark, that 'enemy action' has not done any damage to my books and papers -- at least satisfactory to me. But the enemy has rather put me hors de combat, on the literary side, for I cannot refer to them, packed as they are in cases in the basement, and so have to mark time until better days come. In any case the printing could not proceed now. Another blow is that the public library which I mostly use has suffered badly, and almost all the books of a 'record' type have gone up in smoke."

R.W. Chapman, now happily recovered from a long illness, writes of the regular summer meeting of the Johnson Club, which this year met at Magdalen College, Oxford. Twelve members and honorary members were present, including George Gordon, Vice Chancellor of the University. As Chapman puts it, "No business was transacted, but the Club rejoiced in its continued existence, and the rations were ample Some of the members were later shown the New Bodleian by the Protobibliothecarius in person."

News has been received of the death of the Rev. W. Pennington Bickford, shortly after witnessing the destruction by bombing of St. Clement Danes church, where he had been Rector for 31 years. A descendant of Montagu Pennington, the nephew and biographer of Elizabeth Carter, he was for many years an active and loyal officer of the London Johnson society. Distracted by grief, his widow has since taken her own life.

As a sample of the spirit now being shown by British scholars, R. D. Havens (Johns Hopkins) sends an excerpt from a letter written by Charles Sisson in Aberystwyth, acknowledging receipt of a book presented to the Library of the University of London.

"These are stern times. And we have taken on a stern duty, and cannot escape paying its price. Freedom and truth and decency must continue to live somewhere. And if in the end the darkness falls over England too, it is something to know that these things will be defended further in your country. When I think of the sort of life that has been fought for and gained in 'Main Streets' in Illinois or Wisconsin, of which I saw a good deal, the destruction of that seems to me almost worse in some ways than the destruction of older civilizations.

"But our people are now angry and tough and their teeth are set. In a fortnight I shall be back in my Sussex home, and in the trenches with my platoon of Sussex lads of the Home Guard. And I am 55. In a neighboring platoon there are an admiral and a brigadier-general in the ranks as privates! And all armed with American rifles. This seems fitting to me.

"So I think of this book as being a sign that scholarship, like all true life, will not part from all the world whatever happens here. But we count on winning, whatever the odds against us."

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AN APOCRYPHAL STORY

The story is told that Foote had a bust of Garrick upon his esri-toire. "There", says he, "You Dog, take care of my money, as you take care of your own." "If he is so sharp", replied Murphy, "me-thinks you should not trust him on your bureau." "Oh!" answered Foote, "He has no hands, you see."

PROJECTS

At least one cooperative project is now under way, in part the result of a suggestion made in this News Letter. The episode will be described briefly, with the hope that others may wish to follow the same procedure.

In our May issue Phil Gove (NYU) suggested that Group VIII sponsor the compilation of a list of 18th century books containing lists of subscribers -- an impossible task for one person, but one which might be completed gradually by group effort. Immediately, Sarah L. C. Clapp (La. St. Normal) wrote that in addition to her study of the developments of subscription publication, already announced in WIP, she had actually collected nearly 700 titles of books published by subscription between 1617 and late in the 18th century. With these she had besides "some eight linear feet of subscribers' names already transferred to slips and awaiting study as an index to the reading (or at least the subscribing) public."

Upon receipt of this letter, Gove at once offered to pool his lists with hers, and proposed that her files be made the central depository for all information on this subject which any of our members may incidentally collect. She replied that additions would be gladly received, and added:

"Contributors will please give at least author, title, date, publisher, length of list of subscribers, location of book, and their own names. If they care to add a bibliographical description, so much the more useful, probably to some one later on. Where a book is indicated as offered by subscription, only through incidental reference, as in an advertisement or a letter, that reference and its source may be given, leaving actual discovery of the book for another time."

Will any of our members, examining rare 17th or 18th century books, jot down references to sub-

scription books, and send the data direct to Sarah L. C. Clapp, La. St. Normal College, Natchitoches, La. In this way, someday, a very valuable research tool may be compiled.

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REQUESTS

Howard Dunbar of Washington Sq. College (N.Y.U.) is in process of completing a biographical study of Arthur Murphy, the Irish dramatist (1727-1805). This study will cover Murphy's early life and his dramatic career to the end of his active connection with the theatre in 1777. Dunbar would appreciate information from members on any of the following points:

- (1) The whereabouts of the first forty-nine copies of the original Gray's Inn Journal as printed in The Craftsman.
- (2) Whether any copy of Murphy's Appendix to the Appeal of Samuel Vaughan (privately printed, 1770) is known to exist and where it is to be found.
- (3) Information concerning Murphy's relations with Garrick, if he had any, between Oct. 1776 and Jan. 1777.
- (4) The whereabouts of any letters between Garrick and Murphy not to be found in obvious printed sources or in well-known collections.

G. P. Winship Jr. (U. of N. C.) is at work on a critical study of The World periodical, to which so many important men of the mid-eighteenth century contributed. He would welcome any further information which any of our readers can supply about some of the less well-known contributors -- such men as Thomas Gataker, "the surgeon"; Thomas Mulso, brother of Mrs. Chapone; James Tilson, consul at Cadiz; Serjeant Whitaker; Thomas Cole, assistant preacher at St. Pauls; Charles Parrott; Mr. Burgess; Mr. Moyle.

AUCTION SALES

In the first sale of the season at the Parke-Bernet galleries (Oct. 14) several items of interest to our readers will be sold. One is a collection (26 pieces) of autograph letters from a variety of correspondents to William Hayley about William Cowper. Twenty-three letters from Lord Francis Jeffrey to Sir Thos. Noon Talfourd are included in another miscellaneous collection of autographs.

We wish to remind our readers also of the coming 3d portion of the A. Edward Newton sale, which should be held soon. It will include items from N to Z, and thus will contain the Shakespeare folio and various manuscripts of Mrs. Piozzi, among other interesting and important purchases of one of the most colorful collectors our country has ever produced. We may wonder whether we will soon see another like him. As C. B. Tinker (Yale) wrote recently, "Adam and Newton and Bemis belonged to a generation that has all but disappeared.... We shall not look upon their kind again."

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AN ANNOUNCEMENT

Marjorie Bailey (Stan.) writes of the publications being issued in connection with Stanford University's fiftieth anniversary, particularly Stanford Studies in Language and Literature, 1941, in which appear several 18th century articles. She adds: "since these collections of articles are seldom announced with much clarity, I fancy you may wish to mention the papers I note, and their abiding place." Included in the volume are M. D. Clubb's "The Criticism of Gulliver's 'Voyage to the Houyhnhnms'", E. Montague's "Bishop Hurd's Association with Thomas Warton", and A. E. A. Naughton's "Some Literary Opinions of Madame du Deffand".

THE NEW RAMBLER

Through the efforts of the indefatigable secretary of the Johnson Society of London, Frederick Vernon, now evacuated to Ramsden in Oxfordshire, a new periodical has appeared. The first number, called The New Rambler, is a small mimeographed brochure of 27 pages, priced at one shilling. Its purpose, somewhat similar to that of our own News Letter, is to provide a medium for the exchange of ideas and information about the 18th century.

In the first issue, of July 1941, are a number of interesting articles and one poem. First there is a provocative essay by Percy Allen discussing the assertion, sometimes heard, that 18th century art is soulless; and this is followed by a further analysis of the question by George Vernon. H.W. Bromhead gives a description of various manuscripts of the Thrale family, now in Hoare's Bank, London. The remainder of the little booklet includes: "The Spiritual Life of Samuel Johnson" by the Rev. Sir J. R. O'Connell; "A Boswell Omission" by W. E. Havart; "Jos. Nollekins R.A." by Mrs. K.A. Esdaile; "Abyssinia" by F. Vernon; and the poem, "Trivia 1941" by O.D. Savage. We are certain that the editor of The New Rambler will gladly receive American subscriptions and contributions.

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Jim Osborn sends word that Yale University is arranging a special exhibition to celebrate the two-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Edmond Malone, Oct. 4, 1941. Books, letters, and gift copies etc. relating to the great Shakespearean scholar will be on display. Are there any other centennials or special commemorations which should be noticed in the immediate future?